

Message Text

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EXDIS

DEPT PASS ACTING ASS'T. SEC. JENKINS; DEVINE ARA/NC

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRD, ENRG, VE

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE SCENARIO FOR AMENDMENT OF TRADE LAW

REF: CARACAS 1794

1. AT A VENEZUELAN-AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BOARD MEETING FEBRUARY 17 FOLLOWING LUNCHEON DESCRIBED IN REFTEL ROBERT BEST ELABORATED FURTHER ON HIS IDEA OF AMENDING THE TRADE ACT. HE SUGGESTED THAT IT WOULD BE MUCH BETTER TO HAVE AMENDATORY LEGISLATION ORIGINATING IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES RATHER THAN TO RELY ON SUCH UNCERTAIN VEHICLES AS THE PROPOSED BENTSEN OR KENNEDY AMENDMENTS. BEST SAID HE HAD CONSULTED WITH CONGRESSMEN ULLMAN, CONABLE AND GREEN (PA.) WHILE ATTENDING THE RECENT MTN MEETING IN GENEVA, AND THEY ARE IN BASIC AGREEMENT WITH HIS SUGGESTION. BEST SAID HE DID NOT FAVOR THE KENNEDY AMENDMENT BECAUSE IT WOULD PROVIDE RELIEF ONLY FOR LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES. HE REGARDED THE BENTSEN AMENDMENT AS BETTER BUT INDICATED THAT IT SHOULD CONTEMPLATE PROSPECTIVE EMBARGOES AS WELL AS THE PAST OIL EMBARGO.

2. A DECISION WAS MADE BY THE AMCHAM BOARD TO HAVE THEIR WASHINGTON LAWYER, MR. ULRICO REALE (WHO WAS PRESENT AT THE MEETING) EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY FOR SUCH AN AMENDMENT WITH THE ABOVE CONGRESSMEN. THE IMPORTANCE OF SOME ACTION PRIOR TO THE
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MARCH AND APRIL MEETINGS OF THE OAS WAS EMPHASIZED, BECAUSE THESE

SESSIONS WOULD PROVIDE A PLATFORM WHERE VENEZUELA WOULD NECESSARILY TAKE A FURTHER PUBLIC STAND ON THE TRADE ACT. BEST SUGGESTED THAT A BILL MIGHT BE INTRODUCED IN THE HOUSE PRIOR TO THESE MEETINGS, ACCOMPANIED BY A CONCILIATORY STATEMENT BY THE SPONSOR WHICH COULD PROVIDE A HELPFUL ATMOSPHERE FOR FORESTALLING ANY FURTHER HARSH CRITICISM BY THE GOV AT THE OAS MEETINGS, WHICH COULD COMPLETELY STIFLE EFFORTS TO AMEND THE TRADE LAW.

3. IF THIS WERE ACCOMPLISHED, IT WAS AGREED THAT THE AMCHAM WOULD THEN ATTEMPT TO CONSULT WITH FOREIGN MINISTER ESCOVAR SALOM IN ORDER TO URGE MODERATION ON THE PART OF VENEZUELA REPRESENTATIVES TO THE OAS MEETINGS. IT WAS AGREED, HOWEVER, THAT IT WOULD BE UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT THAT THE GOV REPRESENTATIVES WOULD ABSTAIN ENTIRELY FROM CRITICIZING THE TRADE LAW.

4. IN A LATER PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH AMCHAM OFFICIALS, BEST COMMENTED THAT HE BELIEVED THE ADMINISTRATION SHOULD NOT PUSH FOR ANY ADDITIONAL AMENDMENTS TO THE TRADE ACT AT THIS TIME OTHER THAN THE SUGGESTED AMENDMENT OF THE OPEC CLAUSE. TAKING UP OTHER ISSUES SIMULTANEOUSLY WOULD INCREASE THE POSSIBILITY THAT FURTHER UNDESIRABLE RESTRICTIVE AMENDMENTS WOULD BE TACKED ON AS THE AMENDATORY BILL PROGRESSED THROUGH THE CONGRESS.

5. IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE DEPARTMENT CONTACT BEST AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IN ORDER TO FOLLOW UP AND POSSIBLY COLLABORATE WITH HIS SUGGESTIONS FOR AMENDMENT OF THE TRADE ACT.
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